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LUMPING VERSUS INDIVIDUALIZATION.

EDWARD ALSWORTH ROSS.

AS little societies coalesce into a big society; as tribal and local cultures vanish before the spread of a general culture; as men are drawn into organizations and more departments of human life are regulated, less play is given to individuality. All of the same group or class are lumped together, the differences among them being ignored. Industry, manners, morals, laws, policies are fitted not to the individual, but to the average. Since most men vary appreciably from the average, most men experience a certain discomfort under the social régime. It is as if all had to wear clothes of the same size and cut.

Compare individual labor with collective labor. In handicraft industry the artisan works with his own tools in his own shop at his own pace, beginning and ending the day to suit himself. When he feels like it, he can knock off a bit to stretch himself or smoke a pipe. To-day he may be up with the lark in order to quit early; to-morrow he may sleep late and make up for it by working into the night. Factory industry, however, subjects the workers to an impersonal régime. The speed of the machine regulates the pace of work. Length of the working day, time of beginning and ending, rests, holidays—all are accommodated to the average workman or else to the stronger. Aside from the companionship, labor under such circumstances will be more irksome than an equal amount of the go-as-you-please labor. Since this is so and since machine production is here to stay, the machine tender's workday should be short in order that he may individualize along cultural lines.

Impersonal, too, is the product of the machine. In olden days the carpenter made a chest for the silversmith one day, the silversmith a cup for the carpenter on another and they wrought in sympathy. The knowledge of human

necessities and the consciousness of human good will entered into their work and thus men were linked together. But to-day the factory operative makes only a bit of a thing and has no thoughts about the man who will use the thing he helps make; while this thing is not made for any particular person but for "the public." If you are suited by some one of the types turned out by the machine, well and good; if not, it is almost impossible to obtain the kind of thing you really want. Artists agree that machine production for the market is without the interest excited by hand production for an individual and the products are neither significant nor beautiful.

Nor is impersonalization confined to the satisfaction of the lower wants. When the art economy was dominant the people acted their own "mystery" plays in the churches. Each parish chose its "mystery," the parts were assigned to the best actors in the parish, and the representation was the result of the creative personal effort of the community. Oberammergau long harbored a survival of this drama. Nowadays, when the machine economy is dominant, a motion-picture syndicate decides what shall be filmed. Each film must be suited to the average audience, for it will be shown all over the country. The local manager has no option as to the films he shall present in his theatre. The films are dispatched from one town to another in their strict turn and an exception made for one town would derange the whole centralized distribution. Hence the photo-plays fall into well marked types—the Far-Western play, the ante-bellum Old South play, the detective play, the drama of the big-city underworld, the historical pageant type, the play with the child-woman heroine, etc. Who can detect in these productions the personality of the maker? Yet that personality gives the stamp of true art. No wonder they all die a natural death in a few months!

Before the day of the motion film the theatre bade fair to go in this same direction. But the organization for making and presenting plays was never so tight and close

that gleams of personality could not show through, while there were always some independent actor-managers who fitted into no centralized machine economy.

The military régime takes little account of personal *differentiae*. Since in warfare joint action triumphs over individual action, the tyranny of the average is well-nigh absolute. Little consideration is given to the exceptional man, or to the flow and ebb of energy and feeling in the individual. Barracks and camp are the places of sacrifice of myriads of innocent personal desires. Compare the pleasure from a beautiful stroll with that from marching with a platoon over the same route. The chief points in the soldier's day are fixed, the chief processes standardized. His golden moments are when "on leave" he can lay off this irksome harness and indulge in an orgy of self-prompted actions.

Imperial governments, being without check from the governed, over-ride national, local and individual differences. The later Roman Empire became a cumbrous mechanism which bore cruelly upon the hearts and lives of men. The present government of India, although conscientious and well-intentioned, is felt by the more sensitive natives to be something alien and soulless. Eloquently the Indian poet Tagore characterizes it as "untouched by human hand" and likens it to "a hydraulic press whose pressure is impersonal and on that account effective." It is "a mere abstract force in which the whole population of a distant country has lost its human personality." The subjects feel themselves bound by "iron chains of organization which are the most relentless and unbreakable that have ever been manufactured in the whole history of man." The perfection of its espionage and intelligence service appalls one. Its "tireless vigilance being the vigilance of a machine has not the human power to overlook or to discriminate. At the least pressing of its button the monster organization becomes all eyes whose ugly stare of inquisitiveness cannot be avoided by a single person among the immense multitude of the ruled. At the least turn of its

screw, by the fraction of an inch, the grip is tightened to the point of suffocation around every man, woman and child of a vast population."

The religious bigot eager to make one form of religion prevail and to suppress by force all variants is victim of the lumping fallacy. Individuals differ in the demands their natures make upon religion. They will be happier if they may choose freely among several types with unlike emphasis upon dogma and rite, upon thought and emotion.

How personal one's religion ought to be is brought out by William James:

You will probably make your own ventures severally. If radically tough, the hurly-burly of the sensible facts of nature will be enough for you, and you will need no religion at all. If radically tender, you will take up with the more monistic form of religion; the pluralistic form with its reliance on possibilities that are not necessities will not seem to afford you security enough.

But if you are neither tough nor tender in an extreme and radical sense, but mixed as most of us are, it may seem to you that the type of pluralistic and moralistic religion that I have offered is as good a religious synthesis as you are likely to find. Between the two extremes of crude naturalism on the one hand and transcendental absolutism on the other, you may find that what I take the liberty of calling the pragmatic or melioristic type of theism is exactly what you require.

A like liberation comes from looking upon truth as a personal relation so that truth for you is not necessarily truth for me. As William James puts it, "Ideas (which themselves are but parts of our experience) become true just in so far as they help us get into satisfactory relations with other parts of our experience." Such a doctrine simultaneously justifies an immense variety of different beliefs in different people.

The educator has been an arch-sinner against human diversity. One would suppose that from the beginning teachers would adapt mental pabulum to immature minds. Yet for thousands of years the content of children's education has been the religious and literary classics. The idea of starting the child with simple matter adapted to its comprehension is scarcely three centuries old. In religious

instruction the idea of graded material has hardly even yet won the day. The rigid curriculum of study has been a Moloch to which personal tastes and needs have been ruthlessly sacrificed. Another insatiate idol is the examination system. Some intellects above the normal cannot "stand and deliver" under this system. In excusing his daughter William James remarked, "No James ever could pass an examination." To rate ability and proficiency by the answers made to given questions in a given time is something that would occur only to unimaginative minds; yet in England it is said to be a common practice to give a man a university position on his performance in the examination room.

In the little ungraded school the child progresses according to its capacity. Then a system grows up which impounds the child with thirty-nine others in a class the pace of which is adapted to the powers of the average member. All forty move in lockstep. The bright children are bored and demoralized; the dull learn next to nothing. No one would insist that they should all wear clothes of the same size; yet we lace them in an educational strait-jacket, because we cannot see the grotesque misfits which result.

In dealing with the poor the besetting vice is lumping them together. One social philosopher looks upon them simply as the unfit. Another regards them as the unadapted. To a third they are by-products of our industrial system. To a fourth they are victims of social injustice. Thrift, temperance, godliness, hygiene, education, single tax on land values, socialism and communism—each has been offered as a sure cure for poverty. A hundred schemes have been broached for relieving the poor by wholesale treatment. But close acquaintance with the dependent discloses a great variety of characters and causes. No social worker expects poverty to disappear save by the co-operation of many agencies and policies. The only method followed in modern charity is the "case" method. Just as nostrums have been discredited and no physician thinks of treating disease save after study and diagnosis

of the individual patient, so the social worker insists on full knowledge of the case and adapts his form of help to that particular family.

There is a stage at which impersonal treatment of the wrongdoer seems very splendid. We expect officials to depersonalize their relations to the public, to act "without fear or favor." We praise the editor who is impersonal in printing the news, who publishes impartially the disgrace of his best friend and the triumph of his worst enemy. We call for a clergyman who shall be "no respecter of persons." He must denounce the misconduct of his trustee or "pillar" as he denounces that of his humblest parishioner. The bandage over the eyes of Justice symbolizes that Justice knows not whether the suitor is lord or hind.

Out of this horror of partiality comes, however, the classical school of criminology which will have offenders dealt with impersonally.

The eighteenth century reformers assumed that each law-breaker is morally responsible. It follows, then, that all who have committed the same offense are equally guilty and should receive like treatment. Punishment is to be meted out not according to the nature of the offender but according to the nature of his offense. Hence the legislator attaches a fitting penalty to each type of crime and the sole duty of the court is to ascertain whether or not the accused has broken the laws. This system does away, to be sure, with the old-time arbitrary judge, harsh or lenient according to the social importance of the culprit before him. But in order to rid justice of this offensive personal element, there is created a machine which grinds up alike the young and the hardened, the simple and the cunning, the well-intentioned and the wicked, the chance offender and the professional.

Little by little the administration of Justice has been humanized by admitting exceptions and discriminations. Is the offender of sound mind? Was he in full possession of his faculties? Were there extenuating circumstances? Was there great provocation? Is it his first offense or is

he a repeater? Finally the idea that what is being punished is not a *deed* but a *man* triumphs and we have the modern school of criminology, which likens sentencing an offender to prison for a fixed term to prescribing so many weeks in the hospital for a sick man. The patient is let out when he is well and the criminal should be let out when he is fit to be at large.

On the exceptional lumping imposes the pain of misfit. Too much of it produces a chronic distress like that of wearing clothes that "bind," sleeping on a slope, walking on soles of differing thickness or rowing with oars of unequal lengths. In those who are brought up under the lumping system, *e.g.*, the inmates of the old-fashioned orphan asylum, personality is stunted and they go through life less eager and reactive than they should be. Under the later Roman Empire the unfortunate Graeco-Latins, prisoners of a contracting system, felt themselves emasculate, incapable of the grand emotions and initiatives of their fore-fathers in the old free heroic days.

If we are not to become automata as more of life is standardized and we come under the stricter discipline large organization imposes, we must take more account of individual differences and make proper discriminations. When possible school children of each year should be grouped according to mentality and the class for teaching should compose those of about the same mental gait. Or class work may be individualized by encouraging the child on each topic the class takes up to do an amount of work corresponding to its powers. Promotion, instead of being confined to certain times, should occur whenever the child is ready for it. Mere passive absorption by the pupils should content no teacher; they should be stimulated to react. In the high school no single text should be swallowed whole. The pupil should do collateral reading and compare viewpoints. In college the rigid curriculum should give place to the free choice of studies under advice while the lecture should be relegated to a subordinate place in teaching.

In the care of dependents, the orphanage should make way for the placing-out system. The doling out of supplies to needy people should be anathema. The maxim "not alms but a friend" strikes the true note. Almsgiving which is promiscuous should be thought of not as God-pleasing but as God-offending. Each poor family should be held to present a problem by itself. For certain kinds of dependents guarded outdoor relief is more individualizing and humane than institutional care. By sorting out from it the children, the sick, the feeble-minded, the insane and the vagrant, the almshouse from being a dumping ground for the refuse of humanity becomes a home for the aged and respectable poor.

In the treatment of wrongdoers, lumping survives in the unhesitating and sweeping condemnation of the "scarlet woman," in the "jail bird" stigma which bars the discharged prisoner from honest employment, in the confusion of "political" with "common" offenders, in the treatment of "conscientious objectors" as if they were vulgar recalcitrants, in uniform treatment of types so distinct as the born criminal, the habitual criminal, and the occasional criminal. Individualization calls for the recognition of nervous disorders, passion, suggestion, and obsession as limiting responsibility in the sane; for the application of the suspended sentence with probation and the indeterminate sentence; for the establishment of the juvenile court and the detention home for juvenile offenders; for the differentiation of work house from jail and prison, for the restricted use of the prison stripe and for the treatment of convicts as so many human individuals.

Government passes from arbitrary discriminations based on birth, sex, income, creed, nationality or race through a period of flat democratic treatment to fresh discriminations based upon logic. "One man one vote" looks good until it is discovered that $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of our draft registrants are weak-minded. They were held unfit to be soldiers and they are equally unfit to be voters. After Negro domination has done its worst Negro suffrage is qualified

by a literacy requirement. After the "open door" has filled this country with people who look upon it as a polyglot boarding house we apply the reading test to immigrants. We cease to lump children with adults. We remove them from the factory and send them to school. Discrimination is set up between the sexes, working women being given a protection which does not extend to men workers. If a class is not able to protect itself against another class and there is a public interest involved, the courts deem a law on its behalf not "class legislation" but "reasonable classification." By this means that stiff plane "freedom of contract" has been bent in a dozen places.

Instead of multiplying laws the detailed regulation of industry is effected by means of the easily-modified orders of a state industrial commission. Exemptions are granted that a statute would never allow and special orders issue to take care of peculiar cases. Marriage, once an indefeasible right of the unwedded adult, is denied certain classes of defectives. Instead of the old genial assumption that any citizen is fit for any post, the law creating a board provides that the members shall be engineers, physicians, psychiatrists, economists, social workers, accountants, employers, merchants, practical farmers, etc., according to the work to be done.

The wiser employers are not lumping their workfolk as employers used to do. The individual workman is studied in order to land him in the job he is best fitted for. Physical examination at hiring helps to a more intelligent dealing with the employee. A watchful nurse and a doctor look after the ailing. A well-handled "suggestion box" draws out of the force a surprising number of valuable ideas. The prompt and fitting recognition of unusual individual service or merit improves morale. A brass plate bearing the engine-driver's name is affixed to the locomotive. The highway commission puts up a sign on each stretch of state road showing who patrols it. In a business house the name of the man at the wicket is shown by a bronze marker. In

some establishments each man's performance is studied and if it falls off unaccountably investigation is set afoot to locate the source of the trouble. Employees are not poisoned trying to digest their grievances, for there is a bureau which will look into every man's complaint and see that he gets justice. Instead of "firing" a workman at the instance of a single foreman, he is tried out in different departments until he fits in or proves hopeless. The making of these discriminations costs time and money, but science is providing precise means of making them and the results in greater efficiency, good will and happiness prove that they are worth all they cost.

There will, of course, be a certain amount of lumping when, as in warfare or class strife, effective mass action is called for. Aside from such dictated instances, lumping is due either to heartlessness or to ignorance and stupidity. In centralized military empires there is tenderness for the interests and feelings of the individual members of the privileged class but ruthless iron uniformity for the despised masses. In green democracies flat treatment prevails, not from heartlessness but because the past has made every form of discrimination hateful. But in time it is seen that equal treatment of unequals is crying injustice. As the odious old classifications of people are forgotten men dare to make new classifications based on need, service or social value. The finer these classifications, the less is the sacrifice to the average. In the end every normal man can be well cared for just as every normal man can be fitted with a ready-made suit of clothes, provided that suits are made in a sufficient number of shapes and sizes.

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